

Miatas in Paradise (The Smokey Mountains)

by Steve Crouse

Can you call the Smoky Mountains anything else but paradise if you own a Miata? Curves and mountains, forest and waterfalls, beauty and thrills! All in the Smokies, everywhere you turn. And TURN is the central theme!

We've been going to the Smokies in the spring for three years with the Gateway Miata Club (and invited Indy members to join us this year). We have come back each time itching to do it again. It is a fantastic vacation area in a Miata.

Let us give you a brief synopsis of our week in Paradise.

Photo courtesy of Steve Crouse

Monday was a travel day, topped off by our entrance into the area on Hwy 129, Tail of the Dragon, and NC 28. We arrived late in the afternoon, checked in and located Nancy & Roger Burrill who had come in the day before. With little of the day left, we had the first of our daily relaxation & planning meetings to determine our activities for the following day.

Tuesday, we took an early drive back to the Dragon to take some driving videos while the sun was bright. No one seemed disappointed when I told them I missed some of the recording, and we would have to come back the next day. After a couple of passes on the Dragon, we headed east across Wayah and Junaluska roads, aiming for Highlands NC and White Water Falls. We had missed the falls on an earlier trip and wanted to catch it this time. We encountered a minor problem when one of the cars from the St. Louis group started having a clutch problem. Luckily, he was able to soldier on after making preparations to have the repairs made the next day.

Wednesday morning began with a fire alarm. The Fontana Lodge kitchen had a small problem, but we blamed it on one of our group setting off the alarm. Once we got everyone organized, we headed out for the Dragon AGAIN, to finish up the videotaping from the day before. I did much better this time, but didn't get everyone. Darned if we wouldn't have to come back again on Thursday. Otherwise, our plan for the day was to head west after doing the Dragon, and come back on the Cherokee Skyway. During the drive we received a pleasant surprise at our lunch stop in Tellico Plains. The restaurant, the Tellicafe, hidden off the main highway, was perfect, for food, service and décor.

Thursday, it was time to head toward Asheville for the Ridgerunner Miata Club ColorFest. Of course, you never take a straight route on any trip in the Smokies. This time we made our last Dragon run, caught the Foothills Parkway eastward to Townsend, the northern entrance to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park and through the park, catching the Blue Ridge Parkway north for the final run into Asheville.

From this point, it was wall-to-wall Miatas. Imagine 150 Miatas in one location. Or maybe you can't. If you can't, take a look at the group photo below. Also, check the Ridgerunner club website (<http://www.ridgerunnermiata.com/>) for more photos of the event.

The event itself is a blast. Lots of people who love Miatas. Lots of guided and unguided drives of the Smoky Mountain area outside Asheville. (Our favorite was the "Curves & BBQ" drive.) Everyone came away with memories and door prizes. Sunday morning and departure came much too soon. Just ask anyone from the Indy group that attended. It was Paradise!



Roger and Nancy Burrill (center) get ready for the group photo.

